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Current Opinion

In the *Review and Expositor* for January Professor Orr has a sane account of the prevailing tendencies in modern theology. He finds these set by monism, ritualism, criticism, the doctrine of evolution, and comparative religion. The average man is accustomed to regard most of these influences as on the whole antagonistic to anything like theological orthodoxy. Professor Orr is rather inclined to this opinion at certain points, although he is far enough from pessimism. His attitude as regards evolution is particularly interesting in view of the fact that the doctrine is being utilized by many men like Tennant and Lodge to help understand sin. Professor Orr declares that the more he reflects on the subject, "the less does he feel it possible to obtain the true scriptural idea of sin out of the hypothesis of man's gradual development from the bestial condition, and his start-off in existence from a point only a degree removed from unrelieved brutishness."

This opinion may be just, but it is well to bear in mind that the question of the origin of sin is one of fact rather than of adjustment to a man's views as to Scripture.

Sooner or later we shall be obliged to square up theology at this point with the results of science. Until these results are at hand we must do the best we can with working hypotheses, and among these evolution deserves at least respectful attention.

What Is Reformed Judaism?

In the *Methodist Review* (quarterly) is an article by Rabbi H. G. Enelow setting forth the significance of Reformed Judaism. The author describes it as a genuine democracy, in which every congregation is its own master and every rabbi is responsible to no one but himself for his beliefs and utterances. There is a unity of convictions and of ideals, but not of ecclesiastical authority. The ground-work of Reformed Judaism consists of the leading teachings of the prophets: (1) belief in one God; (2) belief in the selection of Israel as a messenger of God and of righteousness to the world; (3) belief in the messianic age, the perfectibility and progress of the human race; (4) belief in the dignity and the moral responsibility of the individual and in immortality.

Rabbi Enelow further calls attention to the importance to Reformed Judaism of observing the holy days, which serve as a means of preserving

the ties of Jewish fellowship. Reformed Judaism, he insists, refuses to shoulder any responsibility for the sad death of Jesus, which was "the result of the complexity and perplexity, largely political, of his time." At the same time he notices the tendency toward the *rapprochement* between the representatives of Christianity and his own theology.

Sir Oliver Lodge on Psychical Research.

Sir Oliver Lodge, who has lately come into prominence as a writer upon the relations of religion and science, contributes to the *Homiletic Review* for January a discriminating and cautious article on "The Influence of Psychical Research on Religious Belief." He does not say very much about psychical research and religious belief, but he does touch upon a number of interesting subjects, particularly miracles. One paragraph is worth quoting:

It seems to me, therefore, that the persistent effort that is being made, in what are at present rather unorthodox and pioneering departments of science, to investigate and bring into the ordered universe such of the occult and abnormal phenomena as it may find to be capable of repetition and examination today, may indirectly aid that real religious revival to which we look forward: the signs of which indeed we already perceive, in the disinclination to accept a mechanical interpretation of the world or to recognize any well-defined limit to the future expansion and development of human nature. Indeed, a number of asserted facts which at present seem to be wholly outside the province of ordered knowledge, and to belong solely to the territory of faith, are bound to be either extruded and extinguished, or else enveloped and incorporated, as the boundaries of science expand.

This last sentence is worth considering. It is increasingly becoming our custom to insist that religion and science occupy mutually exclusive fields. It may be that this is the case, but they are not unrelated fields. The extension of the one is likely to effect the reduction of the other. The Christian beliefs like those in the miraculous birth of Christ and of the resurrection of the body must certainly be affected by biology. It may be that some day we shall see that religion is a higher form of science—a sort of pioneer which by faith blazes the way for knowledge.